

EMIL RACOVITA

ROMANIAN SCIENTIST WITH THE BELGICA

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<http://www.uib.no/People/nglbn/raco.htm>



Emil Racovita was born in Iasi (Romania) on November 15, 1868. He spent his childhood at Soranesti, Vaslui county, in the family estate. He was educated in Iasi under the guidance of professor and writer Ion Creanga and afterwards he continued high school at "Institutele Unite", where he learned the basics of natural sciences from Grigore Cobalcescu, who knew how to implant passion for the knowledge of nature.



Following his father's wish he attended Law School in Paris, but following his own vocation he graduated from the Faculty of Science in Sorbonne where he learned zoology with an excellent professor, Henri de Lacaze-Duthiers. After his graduation in 1891, he obtained in 1896 a remarkable doctor degree, which made him well-known among European scientists.

As a recognition of his scientific merits, he was selected to participate as a biologist in the Belgium Antarctic Expedition (1897-1899) on board the "Belgica", headed by Adrien de Gerlache. He accomplished his mission brilliantly, coming back with a collection of 1,600 botanical and zoological specimens. Soon after he returned he published a consistent work about Cetacea. He is known to be one of the initiators of ethological researchers.

On November 1st, 1900, as Henri de Lacaze-Duthiers decided to find someone to succeed him, Emil Racovita was appointed assistant-director of the oceanological laboratory "Arago" from Banyuls-sur-Mer, which was founded twenty years earlier by his professor. In 1901 he became joint manager of the review "*Archives de Zoologie experimentale et generale*" also a creation of that erudite scientist.

Following the discovery of a new species of cave crustaceans in the famous Cueva del Drach on the island of Majorca, which he had visited in August 1904, Racovita gave up his oceanological researchers and fully devoted himself to the biological study of the subterranean realm. In 1907 he published "*Essai sur les problemes biospeologiques*" which is considered to be the birth certificate of biospeleology (cave biology) as an independent science. At the same time he initiated an extensive international research program called "**Biospeologica**" (primarily intending to document and collect cave fauna). This, initially private activity, got an official frame in 1920 when Racovita, volunteered to get involved himself in the organization of the Romanian University of Cluj, returned to his native country and founded in the capital of Transylvania the world's first Speleological Institute.

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EDITORIAL

The big item this month is our March auction. There are some really tough pieces included. A very nice selection of Haines tokens should get many of our readers salivating and loosening up their writing hand and running for the check books.

Photos of items marked **Photo** can be found on the page at the end of the listings. Some may ask why we are illustrating some of the tokens that have problems (a nice way to say they are damaged). While we strive for accuracy in our descriptions, there is nothing like a photo to answer the question "how bad is it?" Item 221 is bad, but the description may make it sound better than it is. Item 243 is bad, but the description may make it sound worse than it is. Actually, I am kind of fond of item 243! It served its purpose as a token, and then may have become a key fob. There is history in this piece we will never know.

After purchasing the medal on the front page off eBay, I did some research on the web to find out just who Emil Racovita was. Our thanks go to Dr. Gheorghe Racovita and the website for permission to reprint it and present it to you.

Kenton flies in tonight for a four day home pass. It will be the first time in 26 months that he has been home. We are looking forward to a good visit, clearing up any questions in his home contract, getting his eyes checked, seeing the dentist and getting him acquainted with his adviser at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. That makes for a very busy time. Again, if you know a family with a teen in crisis, please contact me.

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ESSIE R. DALE



Our transplanted Alaskan, Kurtis Hawk sent in the following information on Essie R. Dale.

"While doing some research, I discovered that Essie R. Dale was the general manager of the Dale Shops (clothing and sporting goods) located in Fairbanks. There were three different shops: The Hollywood Shop, Sportsman Shop and Budget Shop. Essie R. Dale was general manager from 1946 to 1957. Her husband, Ford J. Dale, managed various businesses from 1939 to 1945, but I found no mention of her.

"I then found listings from October 1957 to October 1958 of Ms. Dale and Grabelle Leigh Taylor in the realty business at 412 Second Ave. From October 1958 to November 1966, Ms. Dale was in the realty business without Ms. Taylor. The business remained at 412 Second Ave., but then eventually moved to 909 Sixth Ave."

Kurtis Hawk

As noted in Essie R. Dale was born in Kansas in 1881, arrived in Fairbanks approximately 1937. She was a Democrat National Committeewoman from 1948 to 1952, and served in the Territorial House of Representatives in 1949. She died in Fairbanks in 1965.

eBay

If you have internet access, check our user name akcoins@mosquitonet.com under sellers to see our current auctions. Currently, we have a few Alaskan tokens listed, and will be doing more in the future.

RACOVITA, cont.

The results of his biospeleological program are altogether exceptional: 1,200 caves explored in Europe and Africa, a collection including 50,000 cave animals, 66 published papers on subterranean fauna totalling almost 6,000 pages. Biology has never known such a remarkable concentration of forces, as that initiated by Racovita to approach his goal: the understanding of the natural history of the subterranean domain.

The two decades spent by Racovita in Cluj until the beginning of the war were characterized by an extraordinary diversification of his offices. He was a senator (representing the University of Cluj) in 1922-1926, Rector of the University of Cluj (1929-1930), president of the Romanian Academy of Sciences (1926-1929), Director of the Speleological Institute (1920-1947), and member of various scientific associations. His contributions to the study of isopod crustaceans and his advocacy campaigns for the protection of the environment are remarkable. The climax of his scientific career was the elaboration of an original theory on evolution.

In August 1940, the Vienna Dictate forced the Faculty of Sciences and, together with it, the Speleological Institute to take refuge in Timisoara. During four long years, the scientific activity ceased altogether. Immediately after his return in Cluj, Emil Racovita strived to reorganize his institute, but it was too late: on November 17th 1947, the great scientist passed away. The man disappeared, but his work lives for ever, as it is the outcome of a strong spirit which shall not be forgotten.

*This text was compiled by **Dr. Gheorghe Racovita***

Ed. Note: The medal on the front page honors the 125th anniversary of the birth of Racovita, with his portrait set against a map of Antarctica embellished with a penguin. The reverse of the medal notes the 25th anniversary of the Polar Philatelic Study Group with a polar bear and the northern lights. The medal is struck in bronze. The edge is unfinished, in that it protrudes beyond the border of the medal. This would normally be removed in the finishing process. The medal was issued in 1993.



In 1999, the government of Romania issued a 100 Lei silver coin that honored Emil Racovita and the 100th anniversary of the ***Belgica*** Expedition. The obverse features his portrait and the ship *Belgica*. The *Belgica* Expedition was an international expedition that, among others included Roald Amundsen. The reverse of the coin features a seal, penguins, skua (?) and a compass rose.



Above is an attractive medal noting the 20th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, 1991, issued by the Soviet Union. Shows penguins, ice breaker and research station. Bronze, about 68mm.